

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 4512

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (KISSINGER, HENRY A.) OTRA ET

SUBJ: SECRETARY'S TRIP TO AFRICA

1. AFTER I HAD TRIED UNSUCCESSFULLY ALL DAY TO REACH FONMIN KIFLE, HE ASKED ME TO COME TO HIS OFFICE "ALONE AND INFORMALLY" AT 5:30 P.M. HE SAID HE HAD DISCUSSED SECRETARY'S VISIT WITH TWO VICE CHAIRMEN OF DIRG (THE REAL DECISION-MAKERS) AND THAT GOVT WELCOMED SECRETARY'S VISIT MAY 2 AND 3. HE EMPHASEZED THAT THERE WOULD BE NO SECURITY DANGERS TO SECRETARY AND PARTY.

2. HOWEVER, KIFLE SAID HE HAD RAISED WITH TWO VICE CHAIRMEN WHAT HE CONSIDERED TO BE A SERIOUS PROBLEM IN PUBLIC ATMOSPHERE THAT WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT AMERICAN OPINIONS IF SECRETARY CAME AT TIME PROPOSED. KIFLE INDICATED TWO VICE CHAIRMEN HAD TOLD HIM TO DISCUSS MATTER FRANKLY WITH ME SO THAT I COULD MAKE APPROPRIATE RECOMMENDATION TO THE SECRETARY.

3. KIFLE SAID A "DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTIONARY PROGRAM" WOULD BE STARTED WITHIN NEXT TWO WEEKS. THIS WOULD BE CHARACTERIZED BY FREE SPEECH, DEMONSTRATIONS, AND A SUBSTANTIAL RELEASE OF AUTHORITRAIN PRESSURES. RADICALS WOULD HAVE A FIELD DAY AND ANTI-EPMG, ANTI-WESTERN AS WELL AS SPECIFICALLY ANTI-U.S. PUBLICATIONS AND DEMONSTRATIONS WERE LIKELY TO BE MAJOR FEATURES. MAY DAY, THE DAY BEFORE SECRETARY'S ARRIVAL, WOULD SEE INTENSIFICATION OF THESE MANIFESTATIONS. KIFLE IS CONCERNED (HE DECLINED TO ATTRIBUTE HIS CONCERN TO VICE CHAIRMEN) THAT PRESS PARTY ACCOMPANYING SECRETARY WOULD CONVEY TO AMERICAN PUBLIC
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VERY ADVERSE VIEW OF ETHIOPIA IN GENERAL AND OF ETHIOPIAN

REACTION TO THE SECRETARY'S VISIT IN PARTICULAR.

4. KIFLE SAID VERY FRANKLY THAT EPMG IS VERY STRANGE AND SADLY DISORGANIZED. HE PERSONALLY WAS CONFIDENT THAT ANTI-AMERICAN ASPECTS OF UPCOMING RADICAL ACTIVITIES WOULD DIE DOWN IN ABOUT TWO MONTHS. HE COMPLIMENTED ME, AND USG, ON DEGREE OF FORBEARANCE AND UNDERSTANDING WE HAVE SO FAR EXHIBITED AND HOPED SUCH WOULD CONTINUE. HE SUGGESTED THAT MOST OF HIS COMMENTS SHOULD BE OFF THE RECORD AND GIVEN TO ME PERSONALLY, AND SUGGESTED THAT I SHOULD THINK OVER THESE ELEMENTS AND PERHAPS GO BACK TO HIM TOMORROW FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION BEFORE MAKING MY RECOMMENDATION TO WASHINGTON.

5. I ASKED BLUNTLY WHETHER THIS REQUEST TO HAVE AMERICAN GOVT MAKE DECISION ABOUT SECRETARY'S VISIT WAS DISGUISE FOR ACTUAL EPMG DISINCLINATION TO RECEIVE HIM. KIFLE ASSURED EMPHATICALLY ME THIS WAS NOT THE CASE.

6. I SAID I WOULD RECOMMEND THAT SECRETARY MAKE VISIT DESPITE FACTORS KIFLE HAD OUTLINED. I COULD NOT JUDGE DEPT'S REACTION CONCERNING POSSIBLE UNDESIRABLE EFFECTS ON OPINIONS IN U.S. -- GOVT, CONGRESS, AND PUBLIC -- AND THAT DEPT WOULD HAVE TO WEIGH THOSE FACTORS. HOWEVER, IN TERMS OF BILATERAL, RELATION AS SEEN FROM ADDIS, IT WOULD BE BETTER TO HAVE SECRETARY COME AND BE RECEIVED APPROPRIATELY BY GOVT OF ETHIOPIA, DESPITE POSSIBLE DEMONSTRATIONS, THAN TO HAVE IT SAID THAT GOVT DID NOT WISH TO RECEIVE HIM OR SAID THAT SECRETARY DID NOT WANT TO RUN RISKS OF UNPLEASANTNESS.

7. KIFLE WAS NOT COMFORTABLE WITH THIS AND REITERATED AGAIN HIS CONCERN THAT ELEMENTS IN U.S. MIGHT MISUNDERSTAND AND REACT ADVERSELY BECAUSE OF WIDE PUBLICITY GIVEN TO RADICAL ACTIVITIES. I SAID I FOUND IT STRANGE, AND WOULD HAVE TO TELL DEPT, THAT EPMG COULD NOT, FOR 18 HOUR PERIOD, INSURE THAT RADICAL ACTIVITIES CAUSED NO UNPLEASANTNESS. KIFLE SADLY, AND I THINK FRANKLY, REITERATED STRANGE STATE OF DECISION-MAKING IN GOVT, AND SAID RADICAL ELEMENTS HAD BEEN PROMISED RELEASE FROM PAST RESTRICTIONS AND THAT PROMISE COULD NOT BE VIOLATED.

8. I WARNED KIFLE SHARPLY, MAKING CLEAR I WAS ADDRESSING
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SUBJECT OTHER THAN SECRETARY'S VISIT, THAT GOVT HAD RESPONSIBILITY OF INSURING THAT RADICAL ELEMENTS DID NOT OFFER VIOLENCE TO AMERICAN CITIZENS, BECAUSE IF SUCH THINGS HAPPENED, DAMAGE TO U.S. PERCEPTIONS OF ETHIOPIA WOULD BE FAR GREATER THAN THAT RESULTING FROM DEMONSTRATIONS DURING SECRETARY'S VISIT.

9. COMMENT: I PRESSED KIFLE TWICE ABOUT SECURITY OF

SECRETARY'S PARTY AND HE ASSURED ME STRONGLY THAT IT WOULD BE NO PROBLEM. I BELIEVE THIS TO BE TRUE. ROVING PRESS COULD HAVE UNPLEASANT TIME, HOWEVER. WHAT HE SAID ABOUT RELEASE OF RADICAL ELEMENTS IS CORROBORATE BY OTHER REPORTS WE HAVE HEARD; I DO NOT KNOW WHAT TO MAKE OF KIFLE'S PERSONAL ESTIMATE THAT ANTI-FOREIGN AND ANTI-U.S. MANIFESTATIONS WOULD DIE DOWN IN ABOUT TWO MONTHS, AND I AM SCEPTICAL. OBVIOUSLY ADDIS AND OTHER TOWNS WILL BE IN FOR ROUGH AND POSSIBLY VIOLENT TIME.

10. KIFLE CLEARLY WANTED ME TO RECOMMEND AGAINST VISIT. BOILED DOWN, HIS CONCERN IS ABOUT BACKLASH IN U.S. BECAUSE OF PRESS COVERAGE. I THINK HE IS SINCERE IN THIS. HE ASSURED ME THAT SUBSTANCE OF OFFICIAL CONVERSATIONS SECRETARY WOULD HAVE WITH GOVT OFFICIALS WOULD NOT BE AFFECTED BY RADICALS IN STREETS. DEPT WILL HAVE TO JUDGE WEIGHT TO BE GIVEN TO ANTI-ETHIOPIAN PUBLICITY IN U.S. AND ITS EFFECT ON U.S. END OF BILATERAL RELATIONS. FROM HERE, IT SEEMS BETTER TO GO AHEAD WITH VISIT TO AVOID PREDICTABLE MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT WHO DECIDED IT SHOULD NOT TAKE PLACE AND TO SHOW THAT SECRETARY CAN BE RECEIVED PROPERLY, AS HE WOULD BE , BY GOVT OF ETHIOPIA.
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